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Personnel selection as judgment and decision science: An introduction

A couple of years ago, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* asked readers to share their job application experiences. One of the readers provided an interesting insight into the reason why he was rejected for a consultant job:

"I want to be honest with you: It is your photo"

"My photo? It is made by a professional and a recent one"

"Exactly. We were surprised that you really looked so young, in fact almost like a student"

"Yes, and?"

"We cannot send you to our clients and charge high fees; but you can always try a boyband"

(our translation from German)

This short dialog painfully illustrates that selection decisions are not only influenced by empirically established predictor–criterion relations. In practice, face validity plays a crucial role: The hiring manager concluded that this candidate did not look like a serious consultant and decided that he was, therefore, unsuited for the job. *Der Spiegel* did not specify the details of the job this poor candidate was applying for, but let us assume that this was a position for a college graduate at a prestigious firm. Then, this firm may have consulted an I/O psychologist to help design the selection procedure. It is reasonable to assume that this psychologist, following the Schmidt and Hunter (1998) table, suggested first administering a cognitive ability test, and then conducting an interview with the highest-scoring candidates. Perhaps they even suggested standardizing the interview questions and scoring the responses separately. Even if the firm adopted those recommendations, we should not be surprised if the above dialog would still have taken place. What the psychologists failed to provide advice on is how the hiring managers at the firm should use the information obtained in this hiring procedure to make decisions. Exit: carefully constructed measurement instruments and empirically established predictor–criterion relations, enter: "I recognize a good candidate when I see one." Kuncel (2018, p. 475) called this underreliance on empirically valid procedures the Cassandra effect, after "the mythological Greek prophet who was gifted with perfect prophecy but cursed never to be believed."

Many publications in the personnel selection literature are concerned with showing that predictors are meaningfully related to criteria, or with how additional predictors explain additional variance in criteria, but not with if and how practitioners use those predictors in judgment and decision making. However, at the end of the day, personnel selection is about hiring managers making decisions about candidates, sometimes supported by simple assessment tools, sometimes by more complex algorithms, and often influenced by intuition (Highhouse, 2008). Hence, our field is overlooking the importance of how the information obtained through our instruments and procedures is and should be used to make predictions and decisions. Learning more about how and why judgments and decisions are made *in daily selection practice*, under what circumstances they are valid, and how to improve decision making is invaluable (Dalal et al., 2010; Kausel & Jackson, 2020; Neumann et al., 2021).

In this special issue, we present four contributions to judgment and decision-making in personnel selection. Central topics are: How assessment information is used to make predictions, how that influences judgments and decisions (Highhouse et al., 2022; Niessen et al., 2022; Yu & Kuncel, 2022), and how predictors are chosen and evaluated (Childers et al., 2022).

In "Failure to replicate the basic dilution effect in performance prediction," Highhouse et al. (2022) attempt to replicate the finding that the presence of nondiagnostic information in the presence of diagnostic information results in less extreme predictions than when only diagnostic information is present. This phenomenon is highly relevant in personnel selection decision contexts, which often provides a mix of relevant and irrelevant information about applicants.

In "Using narratives or numbers in performance prediction: Attitudes, confidence and validity," Niessen et al. (2022) investigate whether when making performance predictions, the information presented in narrative form and obtained by the decision-makers themselves instead of others is perceived more favorably, yield higher confidence, and is weighted more heavily than numeric information. Furthermore, they investigate the effect of narrative or quantified information on predictive validity. In addition, the contributions by Highhouse et al. (2022) and Niessen et al. (2022) also illustrate a longstanding debate on the definition of "dilution."

In "Testing the value of expert insight: Comparing local versus general expert judgment models," Yu and Kuncel (2022) investigate whether expert insight into the context-specific job and organizational characteristics help tailor judgments to maximize predictive


validity. This claim is often made as to the *raison d'être* for preferring holistic expert judgment over mechanical prediction procedures.


In "Apples, oranges, and ironing boards: Comparative effect sizes influence lay impressions of test validity," Childers et al. (2022) examine how contextual information in the form of comparison effect sizes from different, other contexts, influence perceptions of a sales ability test. They test the hypothesis that comparing the validity of psychological tests to (often inferior) validities obtained in highly trusted contexts such as medicine.

Our aim of this special issue is to stimulate more research on judgment and decision-making in selection and admission contexts. More research on this topic is badly needed because the selection is about judgment and decision-making. We hope that the studies in this special issue inspire future research. For further inspiration and ideas about research topics, we refer to a recent book chapter by Kuncel (2018), a journal article by Neumann et al. (2021), and a recent journal issue edited by Kausel and Jackson (2020).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

No data are used.

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